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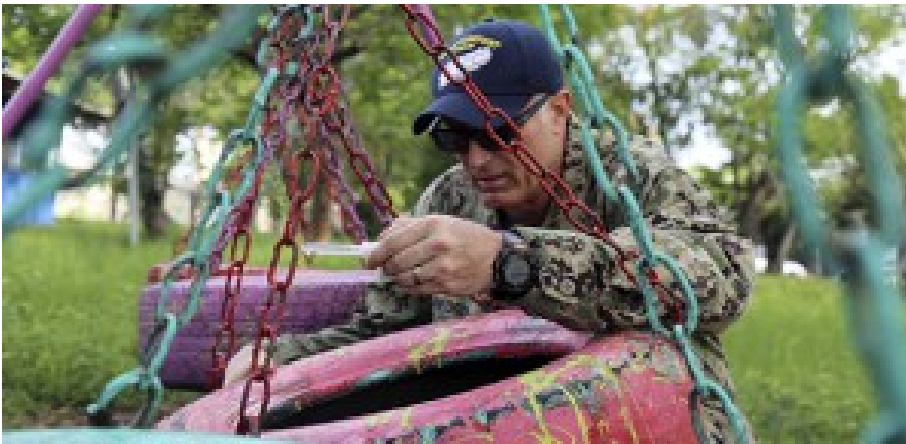
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By Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (EXW) Lazara Y. Medina, Preventive Medicine Technician (PMT), assigned to the Department of Public Health for Continuing Promise 2015



Lt. Cmdr. James Dunford, an entomologist from Twin Lakes, Wis., assigned to Navy Environmental Preventive Medicine Unit-2 in Norfolk Va., looks for mosquito larvae at Escuela de Educacion Especial de Acajutla during Continuing Promise 2015. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Tomarius Roberts)

Editors Note: Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Medina is responsible for force health protection and public health education.

One of the questions I am asked frequently is “What exactly is it that you do”? The best answer I have learned to provide is “I work in Public Health.” That answer seems to satisfy most people. Typically, questions similar to the above, are asked on days when I am wandering away from my desk while in possession of what *all* PMT’s own – a clipboard. We are all corpsmen, but we are just a little different. Our most prized possession is not a stethoscope, but thermometers and clipboards. We may make people nervous as we are standing in any given space, writing on our clipboard and taking temperatures, but it’s all done in the best effort to keep everyone healthy. We are inspectors and educators, but the one thing we are not, is the enemy.

Food and water-borne illness, sexually-transmitted infection, communicable and vector-borne disease are the enemy. We are *the* Subject Matter Experts, the ‘*Gurus*’ of Public Health, within the Navy and Marine Corps. Our number one mission is force health protection, especially now, during the [Continuing Promise 2015 \(CP-15\)](#) mission aboard USNS Comfort (T-AH 20).



Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Lazara Medina, a preventative medicine technician, discusses mosquitoes with Capt. Christine Sears, commanding officer of the medical treatment facility aboard the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) and Capt. Sam Hancock, Continuing Promise 2015 mission commander, at the Independence Polyclinic in Belize during Continuing Promise 2015. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Schneider)

This deployment is beyond anything I had ever expected. We are working alongside members of the Army, Air Force and partner nation military and non-governmental organization civilian volunteers from all over the world. We have all come together to bring medical, veterinary, engineering, environmental health and subject matter expert exchanges to 11 mission stops in Central America, South America and the Caribbean region.

The opportunity to visit so many countries and work alongside each host nation in order to educate, train, introduce and, in some cases, implement new structure and policies within Public Health is an awesome feeling. Our Public Health team has visited schools, clinics and hospitals. We have assisted with implementing food safety and sanitation guidelines in Belize, tested water in local homes and businesses in Guatemala. Got rodents? We have discussed those too. We have even played with a few kittens and

puppies alongside the CP-15 Army veterinary team in Colombia.



Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Luke Peet, assigned to Navy Environmental Preventive Medicine Unit-2 in Norfolk Va., teaches Belizean children about mosquitoes at the Independence Polyclinic in Independence, Belize. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Schneider)

In Jamaica we wore our proper protective equipment in order to observe the vector-control team blast massive mosquito breeding sites with backpack sprayers and oil! We trapped and identified the mosquitoes of medical importance – and then we crush them, helping prevent the spread of Chikungunya, a virus transmitted by mosquitoes.

Overall, it has truly been a humbling experience. The opportunity for us to come together as public health advocates, bringing the best of what we have to others and for each host nation to do the same, while still promoting public health is extremely rewarding. If the opportunity presents itself again I would certainly grab my clipboard and thermometer and do it all over again.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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